

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 GUATEM 05591 031811Z
ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7380
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL BELIZE

S E C R E T GUATEMALA 5591

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR GT UK BH
SUBJ: GOG'S NEGOTIATING INSTRUCTIONS ON BLEIZE

1. HERRERA IBARGUAN, FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER AND MEMBER OF GUATEMALA'S NEGOTIATING TEAM ON BELIZE, GAVE ME A REASONABLY CLEAR IMPRESSION OF GOG'S NEGOTIATING INSTRUCTIONS FOR NEXT ROUND OF TALKS WITH BRITISH IN A CONVERSATION WITH ME FRIDAY NIGHT SEPTEMBER 2. HE SAID HE WOULD LEAVE FOR LONDON TALKS ON SEPTEMBER 14 AND OTHER MEMBERS OF GOG TEAM WOULD BE SKINNER-KLEE, GENERAL MENDOZA AND GOG'S OAS AMBASSADOR CASTILLO. HE SAID HE THOUGHT THEIR INSTRUCTIONS COULD FAIRLY BE DESCRIBED AS LIBERAL. THEY WERE NOT SWEEPING, BUT THEY WOULD PERMIT THE TEAM TO TALK ABOUT DIFFERENT LINE.

2. HE SAID SKINNER-KLEE WOULD HAVE TO APOLOGIZE TO BRITISH FOR A LINE HE HAD ADVANCED IN PRIVATE SESSION OF JULY TALKS WITH BRITISH IN WASHINGTON AS PRESIDENT HAD BEEN ANGRY WHEN HE HAD LEARNED ABOUT IT. HE QUOTED PRESIDENT AS TELLING SKINNER-KLEE THAT HE HAD GIVEN HIM SOME LATITUDE BUT "NOT THAT MUCH." HOWEVER, HERRERA DID NOT THINK THIS RETRACTION WOULD UNDULY AFFECT THE PROSPECTS FOR
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SUCCESS IN THE TALKS. HE SAID HE THOUGHT THERE WAS A REAL POSSIBILITY THIS TIME THAT THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO REACH A SATISFACTORY POSITION THEY COULD PASS ON TO FOREIGN MINISTER MOLINA FOR THIS TALKS WITH BRITISH REPRESENTATIVE IN US IN LATE SEPTEMBER. (INCIDENTALLY, HE THOUGHT IT WOULD NOW BE OWEN RATHER THAN ROWLANDS WHO WOULD REPRESENT UK IN THESE US TALKS). HE STRESSED,

HOWEVER, THAT UK WOULD HAVE TO MATCH AT LEAST SOME OF GUATEMALA'S FLEXIBILITY, AS GUATEMALA WOULD HAVE RETREATED A LONG WAY IN ITS POSITION. HE SAID IT MIGHT WELL BE THAT THEY WOULD NEED A LITTLE PUSH FROM PRESIDENT CARTER TO TIE IT UP, AND WENT ON TO EMPHASIZE HOW MUCH INFLUENCE PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD HAVE. LATER IN THE CONVERSATION, HE SAID HE COULD ENVISAGE A FINAL SETTLEMENT ON A LINE ORIGINATING AT OR JUST BELOW THE MONKEY RIVER AND RUNNING STRAIGHT WEST (INSTEAD OF FOLLOWING THE NORTH WEST COURSE IN WHICH THIS LINE IS USUALLY REPRESENTED).

3. HE SAID THAT MOST DIFFICULT POINT MIGHT BE THE TOWN OF PUNTA GORDA. I UNDERSTOOD HIM TO SAY THAT RODRIGUAEZ OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD JUST PAID A VISIT THERE AND HAD COME BACK TO REPORT THAT AT LEAST 80 PERCENT OF THE TOWN'S POPULATION SPOKE SPANISH. THE TOWN THEREFORE APPEARED ASSIMILABLE AND THEY FELT THAT VERY FEW OF THE INHABITANTS WOULD CHOOSE TO LEAVE RATHER THAN STAY UNDER A GUATEMALAN GOVERNMENT IF GIVEN A CHOICE.

4. HERRERA SAID THAT PRESIDENT LAUGERUD HAD TOLD THEM OF MY RECENT CONVERSATION WITH THE PRESIDENT IN WHICH I HAD ARGUED REASONS WHY NOW WAS THE TIME TO SETTLE BELIZE. HE SAID PRESIDENT HAD QUOTED ME AT ONE POINT AS NOTING THAT NEXT ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE "TOUGHER" ON BELIZE AND HAD WONDERED IF WE THOUGHT PERALTA AZURDIA WOULD
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WIN THE ELECTIONS. I SAID THIS WAS NOT EXACTLY WHAT I HAD SAID; THAT I HAD ARGUED THAT PRESIDENT LAUGERUD'S GOVERNMENT HAD MORE FLEXIBILITY THAN HIS SUCCESSOR MIGHT WELL HAVE.

5. COMMENT: I FIND IT STRIKING THAT HERRERA IBARGUEN, WHO HAS GENERALLY BEEN A LITTLE ON THE PESSIMISTIC SIDE IN HIS PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS WITH ME, WAS AS POSITIVE IN HIS OUTLOOK AS HE WAS LAST NIGHT AND I TRUST THIS REFLECTS A GENUINE DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY IN THEIR APPROACH. IT MAY ALSO BE THAT, IN EMPHASIZING ROLE HE THINKS PRESIDENT CARTER CAN PLAY IN NUDGING THE TWO SIDES ACROSS THE FINISH LINE, HE HAS IN MIND THE IMPORTANCE THEY ATTACH TO THE MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT CARTER AND PRESIDENT LAUGERUD NEXT WEEK. HERRERA IBARGUEN SHOULD BE STRICTLY PROTECTED IN REMARKS HE MADE TO ME.
BOSTER

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NNN

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